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The situation in the Middle East

Measures to eliminate international terrorism

Letter dated 23 July 2002 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Lebanon to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Since October 2000, Israel has persisted, in successive letters addressed to you by its Permanent Representative, in slandering Lebanon. In its most recent letter Israel alleges that there are elements of al-Qa`idah in Lebanon and that the Lebanese Hizb Allah is engaging in acts of terrorism. The latest mendacious allegation is contained in the letter dated 8 July 2002 from the Permanent Representative of Israel addressed to you and issued as document A/56/1001-S/2002/743 to which Lebanon wishes to respond as follows:

1. The allegations by Israel that Hizb Allah has shelled civilian locations are entirely untrue; in its resistance to the continuing Israeli occupation of the Shab`a farmlands, Hizb Allah targets only the Israeli military occupying Lebanese territory. If Hizb Allah has launched anti-aircraft missiles, it has done so only against Israeli military aircraft that were violating Lebanese airspace as part of Israel's ongoing provocation of Lebanon. It is that that threatens peace and security in the region.

2. Lebanon is complying fully with the relevant United Nations resolutions and is fully cooperating with the Security Council in the implementation of resolution 1373 (2001) concerning counter-terrorism. Lebanon was fighting terrorism in its territory prior to 11 September 2001 when the Lebanese army came into conflict with local forces listed as being engaged in international terrorism and was able to eliminate them. Since 11 September 2001 Lebanon has been cooperating closely with the United Nations and with the international community to combat any terrorist presence or activity in its territory. The undeclared purpose of Israel's allegations to the effect that Lebanon is harbouring elements of al-Qa`idah is to slander Lebanon, threaten its security and stability and distract attention from Israel's continuing occupation of part of Lebanese territory, namely the Shab`a farmlands, as well as to justify its violent and unrelenting aggression against the Palestinian people. Lebanon, which has itself suffered from acts of terrorism, has consistently stated its clear opposition to such acts and the President and Prime

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Minister of the Lebanese Republic were among the first to condemn the terrorist action against New York on 11 September 2001.

3. Lebanon has always insisted on the obligation of all to implement the relevant United Nations resolutions, whether adopted by the Security Council or by the General Assembly, because it has a direct and definite interest in the implementation of those resolutions, whereas Israel, for a period of over 22 years, has refused to implement Security Council resolution 425 (1978) and still refuses to abide by the relevant United Nations resolutions by continuing to occupy the Shab`a farmlands, just as it refuses to implement General Assembly resolution 194 (III).

4. By its mendacious calumnies against Lebanon, Israel is attempting to cover up the provocative acts of aggression that it commits against Lebanon such as its repeated violations of Lebanese airspace and territorial waters. Lebanon has persistently drawn attention to this in the many letters it has addressed to you calling on the Security Council and the international community to assume their responsibilities and to request Israel to desist from its provocations against Lebanon and to comply with the relevant international resolutions and implement them fully.

5. The area between Naqoura and the Shab`a farmlands has been entirely peaceful since 25 May 2000 and the Lebanese Government is working to ensure that it remains peaceful; the Internal Security Forces and the Police are carrying out their duties very effectively. The isolated act last April was carried out by an armed group that was not Lebanese and was the result of an emotional reaction by the population to the excessively violent Israeli attacks against the Palestinian people. In any event, the Lebanese authorities dealt with that isolated incident at the time, thus ensuring continued tranquillity and stability in the area which was disturbed only by the above-mentioned ongoing provocations by Israel in the form of violations of Lebanese airspace and territorial waters and the opening, by elements of the Israeli armed forces, of the crossing point in the Kafr Killa area and their entry into Lebanese territory from which they withdrew only after the arrival of elements of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL).

6. The continuing Israeli occupation of the Shab`a farmlands and of the Syrian Golan Heights and its reoccupation of numerous towns and areas of the Palestinian Authority are a cause of instability and a threat to peace and security in the region. Furthermore, Israel's disregard of the principles of the Madrid Conference, in particular the principle of land for peace, and its refusal to implement the relevant resolutions of the United Nations are bringing the Middle East region as a whole back to square one, in other words to a time prior to the convening of the Madrid Conference which began under the auspices of the United States of America and the Soviet Union with a view to completely ending the conflict in the Middle East and ushering in a just and comprehensive peace based on the implementation of the relevant international resolutions which Israel has persisted in ignoring and refusing to implement.

7. Israel endeavours to present itself as being a participant in the campaign to combat terrorism, whereas in fact, since 1948, it has been conducting terrorist operations against the Palestinian people and against civilians in the territories it has occupied. It has become clear that these actions are war crimes which make its officials liable to be indicted by the International Criminal Court.

I should be grateful if you would have the text of this letter circulated as a document of the General Assembly under items 42 and 166 of its agenda, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Houssam Asaad **Diab**
Chargé d'affaires